



**The Avenue Project Task Force
Community Meeting**

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

6:30pm-8:00pm

Viet-Aid Community Center

42 Charles Street

DRAFT Meeting Notes

Attendance:

Task Force Members: Marissa Coleman, Edward Crowley, Sean Dennison, Eileen Fenton, Rosanne Foley, Arlene Lopes, Michael Mackan, Leslie MacWeeney, Richard O'Mara, Nhan Paul Ton Than.

Inés Soto-BRA, Jeremy Rosenberger-BRA, Ralph DeNisco-BTD, Vineet Gupta-BTD, Para Jayasinghe-DPW, James Downey-DPW, Michael Bartosiak-BCS, Andre Porter-DND

I. Welcome

- Meeting was called to order by the Dorchester Avenue Project Manager Inés Soto
- Inès gave a brief history of the Dorchester Avenue Project, and introduced the Task Force to the public. She talked about the duties of the Task Force
- Inés talked about the plan of having two people from the youth as part of the Task Force
- Inés went through the agenda for the meeting

II. Project Overview

- Inés Soto gave an update of the Avenue project to the public: the project will now focus on the area from Lower Mills to the intersection of Dorchester Avenue and the Southeast Expressway.
- Inès made notice of the website update, and asked Task Force members and public to visit it.

III. Updates from the Task Force

- Task Force members introduced themselves and gave their functions, the area where they live, and the amount of time they have spent in the Task Force
- Inès identified several ongoing projects (crosswalk repainting, graffiti removal, tree survey), and made note of the close partnership with DND.

IV. City Inter-Agency Team Updates

- Andre Porter (DND) gave an overview of the different services provided to business owners, and talked about the recent DND initiatives (D-bar and Ashmont Grill)
- Inès gave an update on the Business Trend Analysis. The Inter-Agency Team plans on having it ready for January. She also pointed out that we are working toward the second series of business workshops, focusing on ISD and signage education.

- She went over the main points outlined by the Task Force concerning the allocation of the budget: the different issues that the Avenue faces, the areas that need more funding than others, and raised questions about potential solutions for these areas.
- Inès talked about some of the items the Trolley Force has been looking at.
- Inès finally gave an update on the Request For Proposal.

V. Comments and Questions

- A member of the community asked where the project ends, and Inès answered that it ends at Power Street, where the old laundry was.
- Richard called attention to the fact that people should identify themselves when talking.
- Ed made the point that the Task Force is trying to gather all available information (he referred to workshop comments) in order to make an efficient assessment of the different areas that need improvement on the Avenue (crosswalks, T-stations etc.).
- Members of the community and Task Force discussed the budget. Eileen said that the \$5 million allocated represent a good opportunity to make good changes on the Avenue. We have the opportunity to start partnerships, and really stretch out the \$5 million. Maureen pointed out that the fact that the Mayor assigned \$5 million to this project does not mean that there will not be other capital projects for the Avenue.
- Para noted that the first Peabody Square redesign meeting would be started the consultants will begin soon.
- Kevin Barry (St. Mark's) asked if there was a chance for Morrissey Boulevard to resurface, since the project would be going for five years. Ed pointed out that funding went dead, with that regard. City Councilor Maureen Feeney said that it was back on the shelf, concerning any major improvements.
- A gentleman showed concern about the money being in escrow. Ed answered that the \$5 million were committed to the Avenue project.
- Another gentleman, member of the community, noted that we need to let business owners know about signage rules. Inès pointed out that this issue would be moved to January. This is really a matter of business owners' education about signage regulations. Councilor Feeney mentioned that it is a question of dialogue. Inès noted that dialogue would continue, and that ISD is part of the IAT team.
- Ed indicated that there were four business sign companies on the Avenue that would probably want to know about the different regulations. Richard called attention to the fact that the gentleman's suggestion was that sign companies should bear some responsibility, because they might be the ones selling signage that does not conform to zoning, thus penalizing businesses.
- Inès asked Arlene to give an update on Fields Corner
- Arlene mentioned that she has talked to every business in Fields Corner, and asked them to make improvements. She pointed out that it has been disappointing. "If the business district does not buy in, then our efforts might be pointless." She noted that efforts were made to pave the way for businesses, and also property owners, to participate.

- A member of the audience indicated that sign makers should be made responsible. Arlene pointed out that the property owners should also sign off on signage, and they refuse to. For example, two business owners have already signed thanks to Main Streets, but the property owner refuses to sign.
- Richard asked why this was so. He mentioned that it might be for financial reasons. Arlene said that there are no strings attached, because the owner has worked with Main Streets in the past.
- Anita, from Kit Clark from the audience noted that they have looked at changing their signage and façade, and it amounted to about \$200,000. Andre indicated that if she was interested, she could figure out a budget with the help of DND.
- Inès concluded that signage was therefore of great concern, and a movement that needs to happen.
- Inès asked Ralph to give an update on transportation issues
- Ralph (BTD) introduced himself and talked about transportation issues on the Avenue. He indicated that the BTD would be working on short-term initiatives with longer-term benefits. The BTD is putting together a plan of action for various areas that need improvement (parking, bus stops etc.). They are thinking about hiring designers for more efficiency on improvement project.
- Inès asked if there were more questions from the audience. Ed mentioned that it would take a while to get things going. “The Task Force is setting the groundwork for this project, and there is no quick fix.”
- Anita asked about the process for decision-making. Ed noted that the Task Force had explored this question before. The members of the Task Force will need to work together in order to define the best way to spend the \$5 million. Coordination is the key to allocating the funds. The Task Force is working on educating themselves about this process, and about what the city services are doing at that moment. Sean indicated that the Task Force meetings would be transparent, “with no black smoke.”
- Joe Chaisson (Columbia/Savin Hill), applauded the efforts made toward improving the Freeport intersection.
- Bill Lynch, long time resident, called attention to the fact that the Task Force first needs to consider what is really needed on the Avenue, and also make a list of every store present, in order to avoid duplication in the decision-making process. Inès noted that this aspect would be taken into account in the Business Trend Analysis.
- Inès talked about the Task Force calendar, and a forum for the website.
- Jeremy gave an update on the Youth Summit. He talked about the mayor’s plan of having two members of the youth as part of the Task Force. He talked about the outreach efforts, and outlined some of the benefits of having members of the youth in the Task Force.

VI. Next Steps

- The next public meeting is to be held on February 6th, 2006.

VII. Adjourn

- Meeting was adjourned at about 8:00 p.m.

